SOUTH DADE: Homestead, Florida City, and Redland
By Robert J. Jensen and Larry Wiggins

The Homestead, Florida City, and Redland communities have rich, but relatively short histories. The earliest settlers made their way to the Redland area just over 100 years ago. The adjoining cities of Homestead and Florida City owe their birth to the Florida East Coast Railway. Henry Flagler extended his railroad from Miami to its terminus in what was to become Homestead in 1904. Homestead, incorporated 1913, is today the second oldest city in Miami-Dade County (after Miami), while Florida City, incorporated 1914, is the third oldest.

New settlers had been establishing homesteads in the Miami area for several years prior to the FEC Railway reaching Miami in 1896. After its arrival the wonders of Dade County's remarkable climate, and perhaps more importantly for South Dade, its extended growing season and rich soil, became widely known. Due in great part to the efforts of the publicity department of the FEC Railway, the land available for homesteading (as well as land for sale by the railroad) was heavily promoted to prospective farmers throughout the country. As the choice lands available for homesteading nearer to Miami became exhausted, land-seeking farmers ventured farther south to investigate the Redland district. The federal government opened the area east of today's Krome Avenue for homesteading in 1898. Two years later the area west of Krome Avenue was opened.

Congress passed the Homestead Act in the mid-1800s as a way to encourage the settlement of the country. A settler was allowed to file for up to 160 acres and agreed to improve a part of the land for agriculture and build a house. After living there for five years, the settler could "prove up" the homestead and obtain title to the land. The homesteader could obtain title sooner by purchasing the land outright at graduated prices after he had spent certain amounts of time living on and cultivating the land.

The community named Silver Palm was the first to develop and was centered at SW 232 Street and SW 157 Avenue. The earliest settlers named the area after the small palm with silver-backed fronds that covered the land. Shortly after Silver Palm, another settlement called Redland was established around the intersection of SW 248 Street and SW 187 Ave. Redland was given its name by Frank Kanen, an early homesteader, in honor or the fertile soil of the area. The redness of the clay and marl soil came from the oxidation of a small quantity of iron it contained. *"Redland"* was chosen to differentiate it from the then well-known "Redlands" section of California. Eventually the entire area south of Cutler Ridge became known as the "Redland District."

By 1902, only several families had settled in this area. The early homesteaders would plant tomatoes or other winter vegetables as a means of support while waiting the five years for newly planted citrus trees to mature and bear. Avocados, another popular crop, also took up to five years to bear. Prior to the arrival of the railroad in South Dade, homesteaders had to transport their harvest by mule cart to Cutler on Biscayne Bay, where it was transported by boat to Miami for further shipment by either train or ship to the markets in the north. Flagler announced in July 1902 that he would extend his railroad south to the heart of what was becoming known as "the homestead country." With an assured easier way to ship crops out, the homesteading pace quickened throughout the entire southern part of the county. Late in 1903 the *Miami Metropolis* proclaimed, "there were upwards of 100 families located in the homestead country."

As the railroad tracks were being laid on the new extension, Flagler was looking still further south to Key West. He had surveys completed (under the supervision of William J. Krome) to determine whether a better route was via Cape Sable to Big Pine Key or directly south through today's Homestead area to Key Largo. His decision to proceed south along the route of today's

US 1, and not the more westerly route, set the course for the Homestead area to become the business center of south Miami-Dade and thus retarded the commercial growth in the more northern Silver Palm and Redland communities. William J. Krome went on to become the chief engineer for the completion of the railroad to Key West. He decided to make Homestead his home, purchased land, and, along with his wife Isabel, became a leading figure in agriculture.

William A. King, the FEC section foreman, moved his work camp to the Homestead site in late 1903 and began construction of the FEC depot and the homes for the station agent and the section foreman. The buildings were constructed of the durable Dade County pine, which was readily available throughout the area. They were completed in August of 1904. The depot was expanded in 1922 to include a Railway Express office, and along with the station agent's house was later moved to 826 North Krome Avenue in Florida City, where they housed the Florida Pioneer Museum. The depot was destroyed by Hurricane Andrew but has since been replicated. The station agent's house, still proudly in its "Flagler yellow," is a Miami-Dade historic site and listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Early survey maps needed to designate the end of the tracks as a destination, so the surveyors labeled it "homestead country," and railroad workers wrote "Homestead Country" in chalk on railroad cars carrying supplies used during the construction of the extension. Homestead was given its name more officially in January, 1904, by Flagler at the suggestion of James E. Ingraham, third vice president of the FEC Railroad. Ingraham had charge of the various FEC land companies including the Model Land Company, which had begun selling lots in the company's 600-acre plat of Homestead. The 28-mile extension from downtown Miami was completed when the last rail was laid on July 31, 1904, and the following day the first train steamed up to the depot.

The first resident of the new town not associated with the railroad was William D. Horne, who purchased two lots south of the railway station. He built a store with living quarters on the second floor. Upon its completion in December of 1904, his wife Ida Campbell Horne arrived by train with their household possessions. The building burned in 1913 but was rebuilt the same year. Today known as the Redland Hotel and undergoing restoration, it was for many years Homestead's most important place of lodging.

A little more than two years after the completion of the railroad, all available homesteads were taken up within six miles of the Homestead town site. Newcomers now had to locate in the farthest reaches of the Redland area.

The construction of the railroad extension from Homestead to Key West had begun in 1905, and the resulting economic activity further boosted the area's growth. Settlements were established in South Dade along the FEC tracks and included Goulds, Modello, Princeton, and Naranja, as well as Homestead and Florida City.

Thriving African-American settlements were begun at Goulds, where William Randolph homesteaded and made available land at low cost to other African-Americans, many of whom worked for the railroad, had their own farms or labored for other homesteaders. Black Point and Princeton also had sizable African-American populations.

Princeton, named for the alma mater of Gaston Drake, was a company town that grew up around the massive Drake Lumber Mill. Drake started the mill in 1904, and by 1912 it was the largest industrial concern in the county, employing 175 workers. The company paid homesteaders $2.50 per acre for the "Dade County pine" trees on their land. This was milled into lumber that was

especially desirable due to its high resin content that hardened as it dried and repelled both rot and termites.

Homestead had 16 or 17 children by the fall of 1907, enough to qualify for a Dade County school. The Model Land Company supplied a lot, the school board furnished the lumber, and a one-room schoolhouse was constructed. Two years later, an "L" shaped section was added for a second classroom.

Early African-Americans settled in the southwest section of Homestead on land homesteaded and later subdivided by an African-American who was one of the members of the FEC survey crew that came in 1904. He donated an acre of his land for the St. Paul's Missionary Baptist Church, which today is Homestead's oldest church.

The first white church established in Homestead was First Baptist Church, which was organized on September 5, 1909 with five founding members. The Methodist Episcopal Church South followed soon after. A Methodist Episcopal Church North was organized in 1914. Homestead became famous in 1929 when the two Homestead Methodist Episcopal churches became the first to "unite" since the split of the churches took place in 1844 over the issues of administration and slavery. This uniting began the movement that spread across the country and is why the denomination is now known as the *United* Methodist Church.

The first business district developed along Flagler Avenue on the south and east side of the FEC Railway tracks. If one thing later spurred the development of Krome Avenue as the main commercial artery, it was the construction of the Bank of Homestead at North Krome and Mowry in 1912. The building had a second story added in 1917. It was enlarged dramatically in 1925 when eighteen feet to the south was purchased from J.D. Redd and a large addition was constructed at the rear. The Bank of Homestead failed in June 1927, was reorganized twice and finally closed for good in 1931. A completely separate bank, The First National Bank of Homestead, was established in 1932 by Max Losner and other businessmen who purchased the Bank of Homestead building and fixtures. Max Losner had foreseen the problem of state chartered banks clearing through larger South Florida banks and planned as early as 1925 for a nationally chartered bank, which would clear checks through the Federal Reserve System. Today it is the home of the City of Homestead Police Department. The Bank of Homestead failed not because of its own problems, but because it had its cash reserves with the Bank of Bay Biscayne in Miami, which also failed.

The Rev. J.A. Kahl, who helped found the Methodist Episcopal Church North in Homestead, established Homestead's first newspaper, *The South Florida Banner*, on March 15, 1912. The paper reported on the 1912 Fourth of July celebration, typical of small town America at that time, which featured a bicycle race, foot race, egg and spoon race, sack race, climbing greasy pole contest and three legged race.

Rev. Kahl was instrumental in the incorporation of Homestead as a town in 1913. All men (this was before women's suffrage) were invited to a mass meeting in the schoolhouse on Tuesday, December 17, 1912 to discuss incorporation. About forty men attended and all but one were in favor of incorporation. Rev. Kahl acted as temporary chairman and A.W. Chapman as temporary secretary. At the second meeting on January 27, 1913, 26 qualified voters responded to the roll call. Twenty-five voters were required to incorporate. By secret ballot, 21 voted for and five against incorporation.

When the Homestead community was about six years old, its neighbor to the south, Detroit, now known as Florida City, was born. It was a planned development of the four Tatum brothers of

Miami who organized the Miami Land & Development Company in 1908 and purchased about 25,000 acres to the south of Homestead. The brothers hired Edward Stiling, formerly of Detroit, Michigan, who platted the town site of Detroit just west of the FEC two miles from Homestead in 1910. Stiling planned the main east-west artery of the town, named Palm Drive, as a 100-foot wide boulevard with a wide median, later planted with palm trees. Stiling marketed the land to well-educated, near-retirement-age people in the Midwest, particularly Detroit, as a "gentleman farmer" community where, with each 10-acre tract, purchasers got a town lot thrown in. The plan called for the farmers to live in town and farm on outlying land. The farming land was located on the east glade, a low lying region east of the town and stretching toward Biscayne Bay that flooded nearly every year during the rainy season.

The first group of new residents, about 30 families, arrived in late 1910. They were less than pleased with what they found. The area was still virtually wild, and they had to secure lodging in Homestead and travel to their future home sites to prepare them to build or plant.

Over the next few years, the MLDC began an extensive program to drain the east glade lands by digging a series of crisscrossed ditches. These ditches drained into a 30-foot wide canal, completed in 1914, stretching the nine miles from Biscayne Bay to the town site. The canal provided a way to ship crops to Miami at considerable savings over cost of freight via the railroad.

The town grew to include about 41 houses by 1911, and a town hall was built by public subscription at a cost of $1,000. A turning basin was dug at the end of the canal in the so-called industrial area of the town, and a pavilion was built over the canal that provided a swimming hole during the hot summer days. After Homestead's incorporation in 1913, its leaders started looking at the growth of Detroit with an eye towards incorporating its younger sibling into Homestead. This spurred the residents of Detroit into incorporating in their own right rather than be governed by their neighbor to the north. So on December 28, 1914, voters met in the town hall and incorporated the town, but not as Detroit. It seems that the residents were forever having their mail and other shipments end up in Detroit, Michigan. To alleviate this, the name Florida City was chosen, although technically the new municipality did not have the required 300 voters to incorporate as a city. The town proudly boosted itself as "*The Farthest South Town.*"

The *Miami Metropolis* published a special supplement to the newspaper on November 2, 1912 called the "Redland Edition." The paper pointed out that there were about 300 homesteads in the region and all the available land for homestead purposes in the area had been taken up. Now settlers would either buy land that was formerly homesteaded or purchase some of the vast lands for sale by the FEC or the MLDC.

The invention by Al Lindgren in 1915 of the *scarifier*, a tractor device that broke up the rocky soil, allowed much easier crop planting and thus larger farms. Prior to the scarifier, dynamite was used to open up holes in the ground. Another important use for the scarifier was in helping to build roads through the district. Trails that had been followed along township, range and section lines could now be graded. The early roads were named for settlers and many streets and avenues maintain those names today as part of a compromise between residents and Metro-Dade who tried to impose the numbering system solely on the roads in the early 1960s.

Everglades National Park owes its existence in great part to the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs and to the Woman's Club of Homestead. May Mann Jennings, wife of former governor W.S. Jennings, took as a project for her presidency of the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs the preservation of part of the Everglades as a state park. She was able to convince the widow of Henry Flagler to donate 960 acres of land at Paradise Key, just southwest of Florida City, for the

park. The Florida State Legislature matched that donation. The Woman's Club of Homestead was formed in October of 1914 in large part to support the efforts of the state organization in forming the park. The park was dedicated as a state park in 1916. The Florida Federation constructed a lodge in the park in 1918 and managed the lodge and the state park until it was made into Everglades National Park on December 6, 1947.

The 1915 state census showed Homestead having a population of 721 and Florida City with 368 residents. Several of Homestead's well-known landmarks today were built during this time period. Architect August Geiger's revolutionary-designed, one-story Homestead school was built in 1913 as the town outgrew its earlier primitive building. Four years later, four additional rooms were added, bringing the number of classrooms to twelve, "all on one floor and an auditorium around which they cluster." Now known as Neva King Cooper School, it is on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Homestead town hall was built in 1917 with about $5,000 out of a $40,000 bond issue. This building originally contained the city fire department and jail. It served the city until 1975; it was the City of Homestead Historic Preservation Board's first historic designation and now serves as a meeting hall, city museum, and home to the Greater Homestead/Florida City Chamber of Commerce.

The wood-framed Landmark Hotel, today a rooming house located at 55 South Flagler, also has a historic designation. The structure had its beginnings in Miami on Flagler Street next to Burdines in 1912 where it partially housed Capt. Thompson's Big Fish, an embalmed 55-foot long whale shark that became a famous tourist attraction. By 1914 it had become the Airdome Theatre and in 1916 it was dismantled and brought to Homestead by train to be re-erected as the Homestead Garden Theatre.

Charles Fuchs' Holsum Bakery had its beginnings in Homestead in 1913. He bought the existing bakery because "all the local bread tasted sour." After relocating several times in the city, it was moved to South Miami in 1934 and grew into the largest independent bakery in the southeastern United States. Its original 1913 home, the first concrete building in Homestead, was listed on the National Register in 1996.

Another municipal incorporation took place in 1914, but only lasted for a few years. The town of Redland was established by a vote of 31 to 6. John Bauer was the first mayor. Un-incorporation came a dozen years later when residents decided that taxes in the town were too costly. Residents who were widely dispersed in South Dade did not have the time or necessary transportation to travel to larger towns for supplies. Local general stores met the needs of these settlers and served as gathering places. Anderson's Corner, built at Silver Palm in 1912, is the only known example of these stores remaining in the county.

The Redland Farm Life Consolidated School was built in 1916 and consolidated several smaller wooden schools throughout the region. The curriculum was agricultural based. Though damaged by Hurricane Andrew, plans are underway to renovate the building.

Growth in South Dade continued even with the advent of the country's entry into World War I. By 1920 Homestead had grown to 1307 inhabitants. When word reached the infant cities of Homestead and Florida City that the war was over, it was celebrated by the ringing of bells, horns, and firing of guns. An impromptu parade began at the Homestead School and traveled to the school in Florida City and concluded back in Homestead in a mass meeting with prayer, addresses, and "the singing of patriotic songs."

Post war prosperity began slowly but grew steadily into the frenetic Florida land sales and developing phenomenon known as "the Boom." Many buildings in Homestead and Florida City date from this period. In 1922, electric lines were connected from Homestead's power plant into Florida City, giving the later town electricity.

The year 1922 saw two of Homestead's more formidable buildings rise facing each other. The Horne Building was the town's first and only three-story building for many years. Directly across Krome Avenue from it was the Seminole Theatre, built to accommodate the growing crowds of fans of silent motion pictures.

The following year the area got its second newspaper, *The Homestead Leader*, as well as one of its most attractive homes in the Lindeman-Johnson house designed by H. George Fink. This house was restored after the hurricane in 1993 with help from a grant administered by Dade Heritage Trust for historic buildings damaged by Hurricane Andrew. It now houses Girard Title.

The Redland District Chamber of Commerce hosted the first Redland District Fruit Festival in 1924. The festival was held at the height of the harvesting season and featured fruits and vegetables grown in South Dade. A huge success, it grew into an annual event and lasted until 1948. The chamber was also responsible for acquiring land by donation and condemnation for a right of way for the Seaboard Railroad. The chamber convinced the line to extend its tracks from Miami to Homestead in 1928. The route of this train took a more westerly track through Silver Palm and Redland and provided the farmers an additional means of transportation to ship their crops.

Two of the area's interesting tourist attractions got their start during this period. Lee A. Fennell purchased 20 acres of tropical hammock and planted orchids of breath-taking beauty in 1923. The following year he opened his hammock to visitors as Orchid Jungle. Sadly, the attraction never recovered from the devastation of Hurricane Andrew. A Latvian immigrant, Ed Leedskalnin began creating the stone marvel that would become known as Coral Castle in 1925, after being rejected by his "sweet sixteen" fiancée who would not immigrate to this country to marry him. He single-handedly quarried and carved the oolitic limestone on land southwest of Florida City. In 1937, he single-handedly moved the structure to its present location just north of Homestead. This tourist attraction was listed on the National Register in 1984.

In the heady days of early 1925, when the boom was at its peak, Homestead's population was about 2114. The most ambitious project of the boom was the subdivision "Porvenir," meaning 'a bright future.' The future did seem bright for this project located in the far northwest section of the city. In less than a year $1.6 million of sales were recorded for the 235-acre subdivision. A number of homes were actually completed before the company was forced into bankruptcy in June of 1926. The hurricane three months later destroyed several of the Porvenir homes and put an end to the boom.

South Dade weathered the depression during the 1930s with a series of federal programs that boosted the local economies. There were several CCC camps and WPA projects. Among the WPA projects were an airport that was located near where the Homestead YMCA is today, the Florida City Farmers Market (1939), James Archer Smith Hospital (1941), Homestead's Lily Lawrence Bow library (1939), now a city designated historic site, and the beginnings of Homestead Bayfront Park. The park was begun after James A. Sottille, Sr. had acquired the lands of the MLDC and used diesel pumps to help maintain drainage of the agricultural area. He enticed many Italians to move to the area and become farmers. Sottille donated 640 acres of land for a proposed park on the

bayfront east of the area. He also donated 200 additional acres for a beach for the area's African-American population.

The 1935 state census showed that the population of South Dade was 7998; of these, 5282 were white and 2716 were African-American. The total includes the cities of Homestead ,3034, with 2665 white and 983 African-American, and Florida City, 633, with 458 white and 175 African-American.

Monkey Jungle is another popular tourist attraction in the Redland area. It had its beginnings in 1933 and officially opened in 1935 with the slogan "where the humans are caged and the monkeys run free."

Homestead's 1921 Seminole theatre burned in 1940 and was promptly rebuilt as the city's only Art Deco, Streamline Moderne-style building. It suffered for years after Hurricane Andrew left gaping holes in its roof, but now a determined group is planning to convert the building into an arts center.

In 1940 efforts were begun to secure an Army or Navy air-training field for the area. The county purchased a one-mile square area east of Homestead to lure a military airfield. In early May of 1941 crews began clearing the 600-acre tract. In June it was graded and then paving began. In late December of 1941, just after Pearl Harbor was attacked, the local newspaper announced that the outlay for the airport had been doubled and that the runways would be 6,000 feet long instead of the 4,000 feet planned. Pan American Ferries, Inc., a company which ferried US manufactured aircraft to the Allies, managed and used the base until it was taken over by the Army Air Forces in September 1942 and renamed Homestead Army Air Field.

In November, 1942, the first aircraft, 33 Douglas A20 medium bombers, were sent overseas via Homestead. The base served to receive, service and dispatch aircraft being ferried overseas until the end of the war when it became a training base for Air Transport Command, a predecessor of Military Airlift Command. It was called the West Point of the Air Transport Command. In August 1944, at its World War II peak, 340 officers and 2,617 enlisted personnel were stationed there. Beginning in 1945, combat pilots were returned to Homestead from overseas to transition to transport aircraft. A hurricane in mid-September of 1945 caused such damage that the base was closed down before the end of the year.

Homestead felt the beginning of World War II perhaps more deeply that any other community in South Florida as two of its citizens, Anderson Arrant and Earl Smith, both stationed on the USS Arizona, were killed at Pearl Harbor. Both had attended Homestead High School. Homestead VFW post 4127 was named in honor of the two.

A prisoner of war camp containing mostly German captives was established about two miles east of Homestead. During harvest season many of the prisoners were made to work in the fields and packinghouses to help alleviate the labor shortage caused by the war.

Redland Fruit and Spice Park opened to the public in 1944 to display collections of subtropical fruit trees to the pubic. It was created through purchases and donated land beginning in 1935.

On the occasion of the dedication of Everglades National Park, Florida City was chosen to be the site for a First Day of Issue for a new three-cent postage stamp. Locals still recall the 500,000 pieces of mail that were carted about in washtubs and field crates and that needed to be postmarked and sorted.

The annual Homestead Championship Rodeo was established in 1949, the year following the demise of the Redland Fruit Festival. The rodeo, held in late January, has grown into a weeklong celebration that includes a parade and a host of other events celebrating the pioneering spirit of the area.

The decade of the 1950s brought considerable change to South Dade as roads were improved and more and more Americans took to the road. Tourism began to play a larger role in South Dade's economy. Motels, tourist courts, restaurants and souvenir shops sprung up along South Dixie Highway to lure visitors on their way to the Keys or Everglades National Park. South Dade High School opened in 1951 to replace Homestead and Redland High Schools.

Due in part to the Cold War, Homestead Air Force Base was re-established in 1953, but it was 1955 before work had reached the point that the first Strategic Air Command tactical aircraft, a B47 named "City of Homestead," arrived. The base would see heavy use during the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 and during the Vietnam War. Many retired military families located close to the base to take advantage of the military benefits. They inhabited newly established communities like Leisure City, a massive planned development that originally featured flat-topped "Sundeck Homes." Later, thousands more retirees, both military and civilian, flocked to similar developments like Naranja Lakes and the many mobile home parks near the base.

The Homestead "by-pass" was completed in 1958 as South Dixie Highway was rerouted several blocks east of the business section of Homestead and Florida City. This spurred new development of shopping centers, fast food restaurants, motels, and automobile dealerships along the route while the Krome Avenue downtown began a long decline.

Agriculturally, the area was stronger than ever, as South Dade became known as the nation's "Winter Salad Bowl," with 30,000 acres devoted to winter produce. Avocados, limes and mangos were also major crops. The largest tomato-packing house in the world was built in Princeton in 1955; today it is a thriving weekend flea market and produce stand. More and more tourists and Miamians began discovering the many U-Pic fields along Krome Avenue. Upwards of 10,000 largely Spanish-speaking migrant workers, mostly of Mexican origin, would inhabit the area during harvest season to work in the fields.

The Homestead Extension of the Florida Turnpike was completed in 1974, cutting travel time to Miami and giving rise to the area being promoted as a bedroom community to Miami. Foremost in this promotion was the Villages of Homestead, located on 3300 acres that the city annexed in 1974. The annexation roughly doubled the size of the city. The $400 million project, targeted to house 35,000 people and slated for completion in 2015, was the largest planned unit development in South Florida. Today the project is still being developed and contains the areas of the Villages, Keys Gate and the light-industry Park of Commerce. It was to become home to Homestead High School, Florida's largest when it was built in 1980. In addition, the Homestead Sports Complex baseball facility, built in 1990, and the Homestead Motorsports Complex, built in 1995 and now host to a Winston Cup race, are located in this section of the city.

Biscayne National Park, the largest marine park in the country, stretches from Key Biscayne to northern Key Largo. The 275-square mile area was created in 1980 and includes the coastal wetlands along South Dade's eastern shore. The headquarters and main visitor center is located directly east of Homestead/Florida City. This park, along with Everglades National Park, gives South Dade the distinction of being the only area in the United States bordered on two sides by national parks. This is a leading factor in the area being boosted as an eco-tourism destination.

When Hurricane Andrew slammed into the heart of South Dade just before daybreak on August 24, 1992, the area had about 90,000 residents. Its economy was likened to a three-legged stool supported by agribusiness, tourism, and the military (both active duty and retired) associated with Homestead Air Force Base. The hurricane caused $20 billion in damage and was the costliest natural disaster to hit the United States up to that time. In a matter of several hours the three legs of South Dade's economy were blown away. In addition to the area-wide devastation, mango, lime and avocado trees were destroyed along with packinghouses and the State Farmer's Market in Florida City. The 11,000 jobs indirectly related to the base were gone as thousands were transferred out of the area within days. Many of the retired military were among the 30,000 predominately middle-class residents who permanently relocated away from South Dade after the storm. While the area's rebuilding over the next 18 months created a brief business boom, the long-term effects of the storm are still evident as the local economy is still struggling. Currently HAFB redevelopment remains stalled with two competing proposals, a commercial airport and an office park with convention center hotel and golf courses vying for the property.

In recent years, the area surrounding the conflux of the turnpike and US 1 in Florida City has seen a commercial building boom. The Florida City Outlet Mall opened in 1994 and a new Wal-Mart was built in 1999. A Home Depot is under construction and plans are underway for a $60 million water theme park.

Homestead saw two large developments open in 1995, the $30 million fruitbowl-colored Homestead branch of Miami Dade Community College and a new state-of-the art YMCA facility.

The Homestead Antique Federation, established in 1990, is an active association of the members in the antique district, located along Krome Avenue in the several blocks north and south of the Homestead Old Town Hall. Chosen as a Florida Mainstreet Community in 1993, the area now contains a growing number of antique and collectible shops, specialty stores, and restaurants. Adjacent to historic downtown is a new development of single-family homes called Pioneer Village. It sits on the site of many of Homestead's earliest homes that were destroyed by Andrew.

The Redland Farming Centennial was celebrated during 1998. The yearlong series of events recognized the community's historic roots and its 100 years of farming in the Redland area. Farming, or more correctly agribusiness, today has a billion-dollar impact on the Miami-Dade county economy and produces the equivalent of 23,000 full time jobs.

As farming has grown into a year-round business, programs are under way to convince migrant farm workers to give up the migrant lifestyle and settle down in South Dade now that work is available in the many orchid, grove and ornamental plant nurseries located throughout the area all year long. Mexican heritage and culture are celebrated in the annual Cinco de Mayo festival. Many shops and fine Mexican restaurants are located throughout the area.

In the non-incorporated Redland communities, growth pressures are strong and residents are divided over zoning and development issues. The area is exploring incorporation as a means to ensure residents have a strong influence in its future. South Dade may soon be home, once again, to three municipalities.

While South Dade's economy has remained sluggish since the Andrew rebuilding boom, there is evidence that it is beginning to rebound. Population has now surpassed pre-Andrew levels. The factors figuring into the current growth are spacious open land and affordable neighborhoods, free

from congestion and traffic, which allow a peaceful, quiet way of life. These are the same factors that have fueled the previous 100 plus years of settlement.

**********8

Robert J. Jensen is a retired U.S. Naval officer and a semi-retired officer of The First National Bank of Homestead. Of the twenty-two years he has lived in South Dade, he has been president of the Florida Pioneer Museum Association twenty years. After serving seven years on the Miami-Dade County Historic Preservation Board, he moved to the Miami-Dade Cultural Affairs Council, where he is the longest serving member.

Larry Wiggins was born in Ft. Myers, Florida in 1956. He graduated from the University of Miami with an accounting degree and is the controller for the South Dade News Leader, a local newspaper in Homestead where he has resided since 1978. He has served on the City of Homestead Historic Preservation Board and is vice president of the Pioneer Museum of Homestead. His hobbies include genealogy, and he is an avid collector of old Miami and Miami Beach postcards.

**********8

PHOTO CAPTIONS FOR SOUTH DADE

1. **Florida City, incorporated in 1914, is the third oldest city in Miami-Dade County. This postcard shows an ice plant and packing house in Florida City along a canal that was completed in 1914.** (*Courtesy of the Seth Bramson Collection*)

2. **Florida City now boasts a new City Hall**. (*Photo by Larry Wiggins*)

3. **The Redland Hotel was originally built by William D. Horne in 1904. It burned in 1913, was immediately rebuilt and served as Homestead's most important lodging for many years. It is now undergoing restoration as an upscale hotel and restaurant**. (*Courtesy of Dade Heritage Trust)*

4. Downtown Homestead's Main Street area has been beautifully landscaped since Hurricane Andrew devastated the area in 1992. (*Photo by Larry Wiggins*)

5. Built originally in 1904 in Homestead as the residence for Henry Flagler's railroad foreman, this house was moved in 1964 to Florida City and became the Florida Pioneer Museum. The Homestead Depot was relocated there as well in 1976. All have been restored following damage by Hurricane Andrew in 1992. (*Photo by Larry Wiggins)*

6. Anderson's Corner, at 5700 SW 232nd Street, was opened as a general store in the Silver Palm area in 1911. It was restored as a restaurant in 1985 but received severe damage in Hurricane Andrew in 1992 and has not been used since. (*Photo by Antoinette Naturale)*

7. This private residence on Silver Palm Drive features the wood frame construction and porches typical of early architecture in much of South Dade. (*Photo by Antoinette Naturale*)

8. and 9. Cauley Square, 22400 Old Dixie Highway, is a charming collection of historic buildings which were restored over the years by Mary Ann Ballard as a shopping village. Cauley Square's folksy, unique stores are an antidote to big-city mall madness. (*Photo by Antoinette Naturale*)

10. A tourist inspects an exotic fruit at the Redland Fruit and Spice Park, located at 24801 SW 187th Avenue. The park first opened in 1944 and is now run by Miami-Dade County. (*Courtesy Miami-Dade County Park and Recreation Department*)

11. **Coral Castle, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is one of the most unusual sites in Florida. Singlehandedly and with limited tools Edward Leedskalnin, a tiny Latvian immigrant, sculpted moons and planets out of stone boulders weighing several tons each. He settled in Florida City in the early 1920s and began his labors as therapy for a lost love. In 1937 he moved his monumental sculptures, at night, supposedly without assistance, to "Rock Gate," a 10-acre tract at 28655 South Federal Highway in Homestead, which he opened as a tourist attraction. The perimeter wall around Rock Gate has a nine-ton movable gate; one of the sculptures weighs 30 tons. When asked how he moved such heavy objects, he said he had learned the secrets of the Egyptian pyramid builders.** (*Photo by Antoinette Naturale)*

12. The Homestead Motorsports Complex was built in 1995 and now attracts thousands to its nationally renowned auto races. (*Courtesy of the Homestead Miami Speedway, L.L.C)*

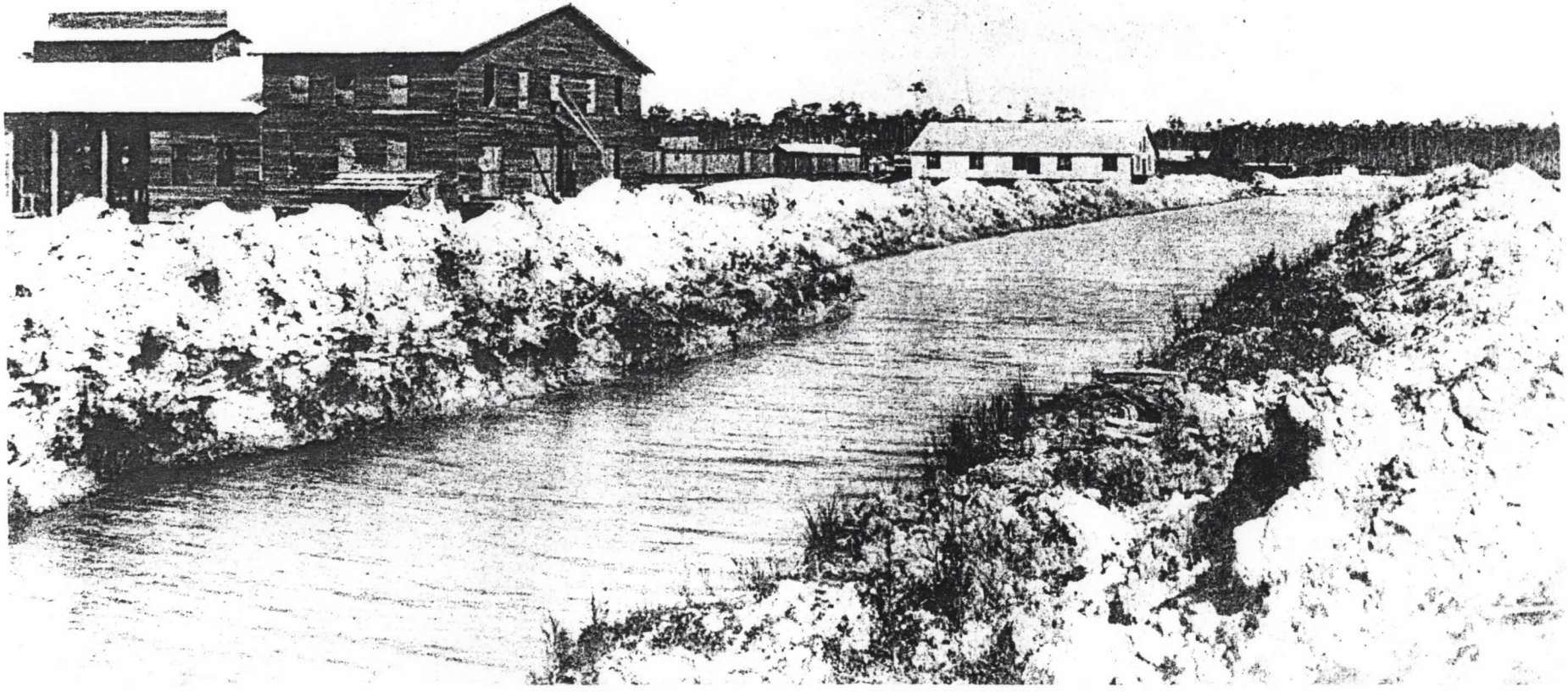
13. **South Dade borders on two national parks, Biscayne National Park and the world-famous Everglades, Florida's "River of Grass." Each attracts millions of visitors a year and are priceless environmental treasures. In this photo of the Everglades, an alligator is seen in the freshwater marsh and sawgrass.** (*Courtesy of the National Park Service)*

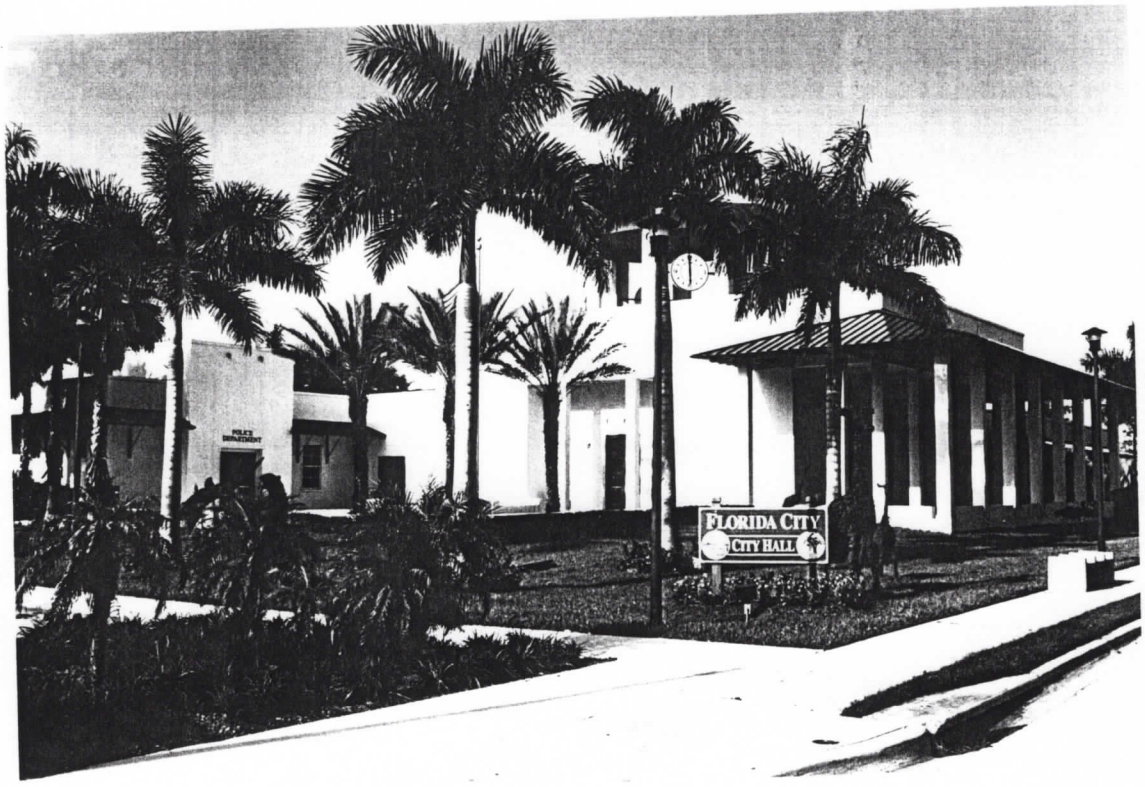
14. **Biscayne National Park is the nation's largest marine park. The Park's Convoy Point Visitor Center offers educational exhibits, lectures and boat trips.** (*Photo by Wallace, Roberts & Todd, courtesy of Biscayne National Park)*

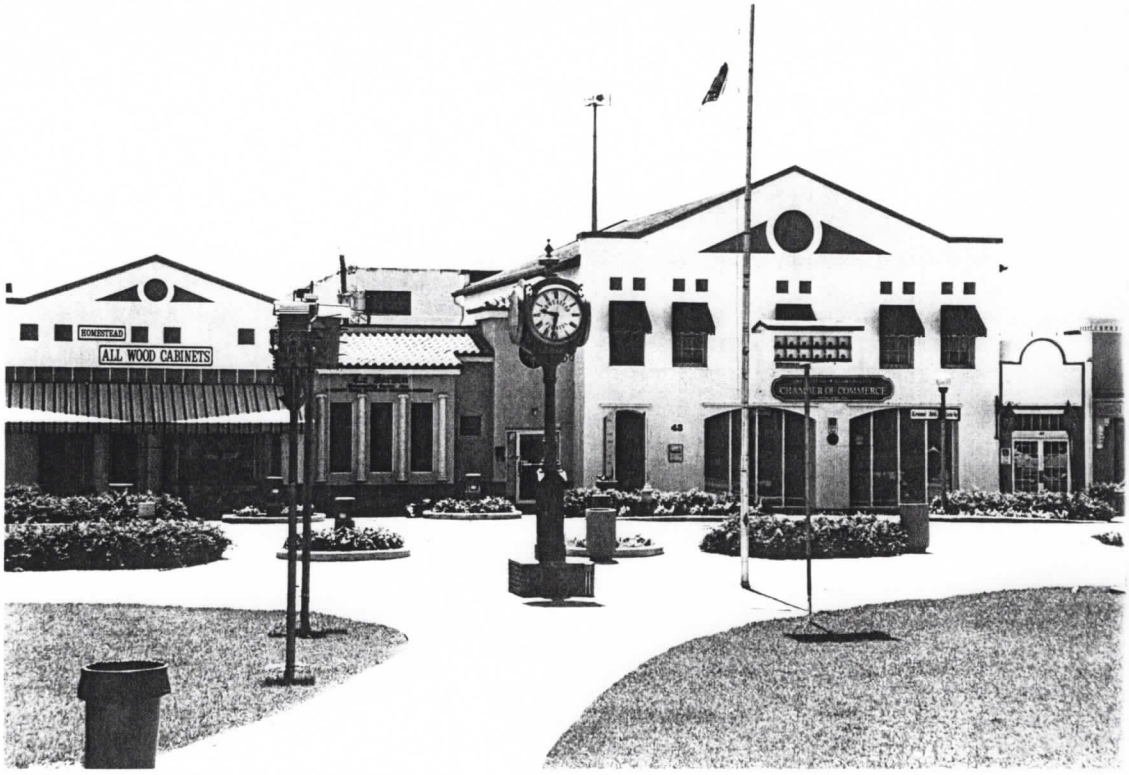
15. **Over 200 species of fish call the coral reefs of Biscayne National Park home.** (*Courtesy of the National Park Service)*

16. **An ornamental lighthouse on Boca Chita Key is a popular destination for boaters in Biscayne National Park.** (*Photo by Jeff Heywood, courtesy of the National Park Service*)

Ice Plant and Packing House, Florida City, Fla.




FLORIDA CITY
CITY HALL


HOMESTEAD
ALL WOOD CABINETS
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE